

Open Source Innovation: Role Reversal of Consumers and Producers

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Usually we reconstruct market processes as a combination of exchange and competition (Swedberg 1994). But only when we conceive market processes as a condition for opportunities for exchange (Wiesenthal 2000), we discover their significant peculiarity (Blutner 2005). It consists in the simultaneity of equal and unequal interests of the exchange partners and in the presence of at least one competitor on the supply or demand side. This competition (which partner, under which conditions?) generates the incentive to create product innovations in order to escape from the price competition. Companies increase their ability to generate innovations by establishing specific customer relations and by cooperation with costumers.

A review of the last six decades does not only show a colorful picture of cooperational settings that were formed in this way, but also reveals the increasing integration of the customer into the processes of development and production. This includes:

- Individual Production for a costumer
- Generation of restrictive user relations of the kind of "Do it yourself" – options (IKEA; banking business)
- User integration into networks with constant partners by contractual agreements (business reengineering)
- Interactive value-generation by customer integration in order to find ideas, develop concepts or products etc.

In recent years we have been able to observe the emergence of the new phenomenon OPEN SOURCE INNOVATION as a location of work and as a location of the production of collective goods (Lerner/Tirole 2002; Blutner/v.Lüde 2008). We define Open Source Innovation as an innovation which is generated through voluntary contributions and characterized by a non-market transfer of knowledge between the actors involved in invention and those involved in exploitation. Actors involved in invention provide open access to their results (in essential parts) for anyone wishing to exploit them, allowing utilization, modification, and re-distribution. We interpret this development as a new kind of division of labor - beyond previous cooperational settings between costumer and producer - which is characterized by the floating takeover of "roles" inside a project; thus referring to Castells' (2003) idea of an 'informational mode of development' of labor and information technology. The phenomena 'Lead User', 'crowd-sourcing' (Piller/Reichwald 2006), and 'private collective model' (v.Hippel/v.Krogh 2003) are not only examples for Castells' idea but also for the constitution of a 'pro-sumer'.

In contrast to these phenomena Open Source Innovation Projects are characterized by a radical reversion of the previous roles of producer and customer. This redefinition means that the producer works voluntarily and without payment for the generation of the product (or parts of it) which can be used by the customer individually or for commercial exploitation. This new kind of division of labor poses the question of where and by which authority decisions are made.

In our contribution we would like to present the findings of our research about Open Source Innovation Projects. In these investigated projects, we can observe a new kind of division of labor which is based on a new understanding of membership, leadership and decision-making.

To identify and to discuss the new kind of division of labor, in our contribution we compare the input factors (What do organizations organize?), the internal decision processes

(How do organizations decide?), and the output factors (What are the conditions for organizational success?) of three cooperational settings: a knowledge-based cooperation between a producer and a customer generating a problem solution; a crowd-sourcing process; and an open source innovation project. The reference point of our research is the BMBF-Project "Transfer of Open Source / Open Innovation on other lines of business" (FKZ of BMBF: 16/1573).

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